

April 28, 2003

Dear Chief Examiners, Alternate Examiners, Proctors, & All Testing Center Staff:

April 2003 GED Update

Billing

Testing Centers will shortly receive a billing summary (***not an invoice; this is a billing summary only***) from Educational Testing Service (ETS) for the first, second and third quarters of the 2002 calendar year. Note that ETS refers to the “first quarter” as January through March; this corresponds to the “third quarter” of the standard 2002-2003 fiscal year.

This summary reflects an extensive effort to correct billing errors incurred since January of 2002. Many of these errors occurred because of incorrect bubbling on the demographic sheet (resulting in multiple records in the ETS system) and incorrect bubbling on the test center identification sheet (resulting in the wrong center being charged).

The ETS billing summary will reflect adjustments that have been made to the first three quarters of 2002 and provide the total that each center will be billed for the last quarter (October through December) of the 2002 calendar year. The actual invoice for the last quarter’s scoring fees should arrive shortly after receipt of the ETS summary. An adjusted billing from the State GED Office Sacramento that reflects these corrections will be mailed to testing centers shortly thereafter. And finally, GEDTS will be notified of the necessary adjustments so that they may modify their 2002 invoices as appropriate.

Educational Testing Service has modified its billing system to ensure that billing errors occurring because incorrect bubbling on the answer sheets will be handled automatically. However, it is the responsibility of individual centers to make sure that the center number is bubbled in correctly on the test center identification sheet. Please make sure to double-check this number before submitting answer sheets to ETS.

Also, note that problems with multiple records in the ETS system (that result in multiple billings for the same person) are almost exclusively confined to examinees testing in Spanish. When first submitting answer sheets for these examinees, make sure to leave the social security number ***blank*** if no SSN is available. ***Do not use placeholder***

numbers. ETS will assign an identification number to these examinees, and centers will *not* be charged as if it were an error. If subsequent answer sheets must be submitted for the same examinee, go to the ETS website, record the number that has been assigned by ETS, and make sure that the examinee bubbles this number in the SSN grid.

ETS Edit Reject Reports

Effective immediately, ETS will no longer be faxing Edit Reject Reports to testing centers. To speed error correction, ETS staff will contact centers by telephone to obtain information needed to resolve bubbling errors. If scores are missing from the website when others are posted from the same batch, allow two days before calling ETS to check on the missing scores. Not all errors require ETS to call the center, and two days is generally enough time for ETS to resolve the error and post the scores.

Paper edit reports will now be included with quarterly billings from ETS to document error/change fees incurred.

Security Issues

Most testing centers are probably aware of the recent incident involving GED Testing in Arizona, when an entire cabinet of GED materials (all forms, all languages) was stolen from a testing center in Tucson. Testing was suspended throughout the entire state for several months, and there is still no word on the whereabouts of those materials.

During the past year, three testing centers in California have been burglarized, with the cabinets housing secure materials forced open. We have been extremely fortunate in that the perpetrators were obviously seeking cash and saleable items and did not disturb or steal the GED tests. However, these incidents raise a number of questions and concerns about secure storage at testing centers:

- Does your GED storage cabinet have sidebar locking devices for extra protection? This is an absolute requirement. If you do not yet have sidebar locks on your cabinets, order them now.
- Where is your storage cabinet located? Your cabinet should be in an area away from foot traffic and the general public.
- Are materials stored in an office area that is alarmed? If you have the option of storing materials in an office equipped with security alarms, consider moving your cabinet to that location.
- Are there copy machines or scanners adjacent to the area where your materials are located? Though we know that it is virtually impossible to house materials in an area that is entirely free of reprographic technology, consider locating your cabinet in a locking office or storage area that does not have these machines immediately available.
- Do you accept testing fees or keep petty cash on the premises where your materials are stored? We strongly recommend that you do *not* accept testing fees or keep other cash in the area where tests are stored—and post a notice in the area

advising clients that no cash is kept on the premises. The perpetrators of the burglaries noted above were obviously seeking cash and knew in advance that money was somewhere in the office.

Test Embargo/Retesting

A recent test compromise in the Piedmont area resulted in an embargo of the entire AD test battery for 36 bay area testing centers. If your center has been affected by this embargo, please note that GED Testing Service will permit examinees who have taken forms AE and AF to rotate back to whichever test was taken earliest for retesting, should a third test administration become necessary.

This retesting policy **ONLY** applies to centers affected by the embargo. Centers that did not receive an embargo notice in March regarding this incident should continue testing (and retesting) as usual.

Spanish Testing Cutoff Date

As we did with the English-language GED tests in 2001, we are now winding up the last year of administering the current generation of Spanish-language tests. Beginning in January of 2004, a new generation of Spanish-language tests will be released. No scores earned before January of 2004 may be combined with any scores earned after this date.

Attached are two items to assist you with this transition. One is an announcement regarding the cutoff dates, in both English and Spanish, to post at your center. The State GED Office will be mailing this announcement to all examinees with partial/failing Spanish scores in our database for whom we have address information.

The other is a sample of a Notification/Acknowledgement Statement, in both English and Spanish. We strongly encourage testing sites to have each examinee taking the Spanish-language test sign an acknowledgement that they are aware of the upcoming deadlines for completing and passing the test. If you have not incorporated this procedure into your registration process for new examinees, you should begin as soon as possible. Ensuring that examinees know the cutoff dates by requiring them to sign these statements will enable you to avoid misunderstandings, confusion or legal challenges to your cutoff dates at the end of the year.

Additionally, Educational Testing Service will be adding information regarding the Spanish-language test cutoff date to the score report that is printed from the website. Remember that examinees testing prior to the cutoff date must receive their test results *quickly*, so that (if necessary) they can plan for re-testing. Therefore, please make sure to promptly send completed answer sheets to ETS and mail test results to examinees as soon as they are available at the website.

Spanish-Language Test Instructions

If you are offering Spanish-language testing, be aware that you *must* read the instructions that accompany that version of the test. Instructions for the Spanish-language test are \$5 and may be ordered from the GED Fulfillment Center. The telephone number for ordering is: 301-632-6758. The address is: GED Fulfillment Center; Department 191; Washington, D.C. 20055. You will be ordering item #251-018, “GED Forma Administrar Las Pruebas.”

Please note: The Spanish test administration instructions are basically a translation of the last generation of English-language instructions. There are no substantial differences in the timing or administration of the current generation of Spanish tests and the last generation of English tests. If there are any questions on test administration, please contact Nancy Edmunds in the State GED Office.

Summer Training Schedule

Attached is a schedule and registration form for the Summer 2003 GED examiner training series. Trainings have been scheduled in San Mateo, Sacramento, Riverside, San Diego and Visalia. New GED Staff are required to attend one state training session—*this includes all new GED Chief Examiners, Alternate Examiners, and Proctors.*

Maps and directions are attached. Note that the trainings are each two days in length, with the first day devoted to testing center operations, procedural issues, and security, and the second day focusing on test administration. There is no charge for the training sessions, and we would appreciate it if registration forms were submitted no later than two weeks in advance of the training dates.

Though new staff are *required* to attend, experienced examiners and proctors are also welcome—particularly if you have not attended training since the new generation of tests was released in 2002.

GED Connection Licensing

On behalf of the California Department of Education’s Adult Education Office, the California Distance Learning Project has purchased a five-year state license for the distribution and use of the Kentucky Education Television (KET) *GED Connections* video series. The license runs until June 30, 2007.

One free set of the VHS episodes is available to each and any adult education organization receiving state or federal adult education funds. *GED Connections* consists of 39 half-hour programs covering the five major subject areas of the GED 2002 exam. For additional information, visit the California Distance Learning Project (CDLP) website at www.cdldonline.org, or call the CDLP at 510-644-0437.

Annual Statewide GED Examiners Meeting

Mark your calendars for October 23-24, 2003, when the State GED Office will be holding the annual statewide meeting for all Chief Examiners. The meeting will be scheduled at a hotel conference center near Los Angeles International Airport. We expect the contract with the hotel to be signed and finalized within the next 30 days, and at that time, registration materials will be mailed to all testing centers.

Attendance at the meeting is mandatory as per Section 1.3 of the *GED Examiner's Manual*, which states that: "Under penalty of closing...each Official GED Testing Center must provide the following assurances to the GED Testing Service...[that] staff attendance at an annual GED Examiners' meeting is supported, both financially and administratively."

If the Chief Examiner is unable to attend the meeting, a designated Alternate Examiner must attend. Additional testing center staff are also welcome to participate.

Tentatively, the agenda will begin on the morning of the 23rd with a meeting of new staff who have been appointed to Chief Examiner positions since last year's meeting. In the early afternoon, there will be a meeting of Chief Examiners from state correctional facilities. The opening general session for all Chief Examiners and testing staff will be held late that afternoon. The morning of the 24th will be dedicated to breakout sessions, and the conference should wind up after lunch at approximately 2:00 p.m. We will provide more information on the content and agenda of the meeting as it becomes available.

State GED Office Relocation

The State GED Office relocated to a different suite within the Department of Education during the week of April 14-18. All telephone numbers remain the same, and mail should continue to be sent to the GED Post Office Box address (State GED Office; P.O. Box 710273; Sacramento, CA 94244-0273).

Should you need to express-mail a package to the State GED Office, you may use the following street address: State GED Office; CA Department of Education; 1430 N St., Suite 5408; Sacramento, CA 95814.

2002 National Award for Outstanding Achievement

Enclosed are the forms to complete for those examinees who have earned exceptionally high scores on their GED tests and meet the criteria for participating in the 2002 Outstanding Achievement Award program. Each participant must complete and sign the enclosed release form and provide a brief biography. Testing center staff must complete the Examinee Data Form. To participate, examinees must meet all of the following criteria:

1. The examinee took the GED Tests between January 1 and December 31, 2002.
2. The examinee achieved a total GED standard score of 3000 or above.
3. The examinee earned his or her score the first time he or she took the test.
4. The examiner was 18 years of age or older at the time he or she tested.
5. The examinee was not enrolled in any for-credit postsecondary-level courses before or during the time he or she took the GED Tests. Such coursework does not include GED preparation courses, continuing education courses, and non-credit courses offered in a college setting.

The GED Testing Service will present a national award plaque to the examinee who receives the highest score on the GED Tests in California during 2002, and the State GED office will send congratulatory memorandums to all participants.

Applications must be accompanied by a score report printed from the ETS website. Mail the Release Form, Examinee Data Form, score report and a biography of the candidate to: Nancy J. Edmunds, Associate Analyst; GED Office; CA Department of Education; P.O. Box 710273; Sacramento, CA 94244-0273. All applications must be received in the State GED Office by June 2, 2003.

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If there are any questions on any of the contents of this memo, please feel free to contact the State GED Office at 800-331-6316.

Sincerely,

Mark Fetler, State GED Administrator
California Department of Education

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Enclosures